

1.96 Interpreter Policy & Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out specific guidelines on how to access an interpreter and how Value Care uses interpreters.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Value Care.

3. Arranging an Interpreter

3.1 Assessing the need for an interpreter

Wherever possible the need for an interpreter should be determined prior to an appointment. It is important that the person who make the appointment asks if an interpreter is required.

Assessing how well a person can understand English is the first step in identifying the need for an interpreter. even when a client appears to have adequate proficiency in English, a stressful or unfamiliar situation may a affect the client's ability to communicate effectively.

3.2 Engaging an interpreter is recommended if:

- requested by the client;
- the client cannot comprehend or respond to basic questions in English;
- the client is di cult to understand, or can only respond in a limited way;
- the client relies on family or friends to communicate;
- the client prefers to speak in his/her own language; or
- the client speaks English as a second language, and is in a stressful, complex or unfamiliar situation.

To determine a client's level of English language proficiency, the following questions may be useful:

- why are you here today?
- Is English your first language?
- In which country were you born?
- how long have you lived in Australia?
- how long have you been learning or speaking English?

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If the client cannot respond to these questions fluently, or if the responses are difficult to understand, an interpreter is recommended.

3.3 Determining the preferred language

A client's language cannot be determined reliably from their country of birth. For example, a person from china may speak mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka or another Chinese dialect. In some cases, more than one language may be spoken. The following steps may help to determine a client's preferred language:

- If a client speaks sufficient English, it may be possible to ask for their preferred language, especially if they have used interpreters previously.
- use visual aids that list languages. the client may be able to point to the language they speak.
- If this fails, contact a language service provider and they may be able to assist you to identify the language through a telephone interpreter.

3.4 Arranging an Interpreter

If interpreting is refused? If a client refuses the use of an interpreter, it is important to try to clarify and address the reasons. Possible reasons are that the client:

- has misunderstood why an interpreter is needed
- may feel confident communicating in English
- may prefer a family member or friend to act as an interpreter
- may know the interpreter assigned to the interview and feel uncomfortable
- may be concerned that they will have to pay for the interpreter
- may be uncomfortable with the gender of the interpreter.

If the client continues to refuse an interpreter, you may choose to continue with the appointment and document your concerns.

Choosing the mode of interpreting. There are three ways of providing interpreting services:

- onsite (face-to-face)
- telephone
- videoconferencing.

3.5 Onsite interpreting (face-to-face)

Onsite interpreters attend in person and should be engaged when complex, legally binding or lengthy matters need to be discussed. onsite interpreting takes into account non-verbal cues (e.g. body language), and therefore is recommended in complex situations.

3.6 Telephone interpreting

Telephone interpreting is particularly useful in emergency situations when immediate assistance is required. It is also useful for shorter, less complex communication. telephone interpreting may be the only option in some cases

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Telephone interpreting can also be used to access an interpreter in languages for which there are a limited number of accredited interpreters, or to establish the language spoken and the nature of an enquiry before an onsite interpreter is booked.

As telephone interpreters cannot take into account non-verbal communication, they are not used for auslan clients. Calls to someone who is deaf can be made using an ordinary handset through the national relay service (nrs) on 133 677.

3.7 Videoconference interpreting

Videoconferencing allows remote access to an interpreter through video. Videoconference interpreting enables face-to-face communication and offers some advantages over telephone interpreting. The Department of Human Services has Video relay Interpreting (Vri).

3.8 Booking the interpreter

The language service provider requires specific information to book an interpreter. to book an onsite interpreter, the following information is essential:

- client's name
- language/dialect required
- preferred gender of the interpreter (if relevant)
- date and time the interpreter is required – ensure you allow time to brief the interpreter beforehand
- type of appointment, for example, a medical or legal appointment or court hearing, etc.
- address of the agency requiring the interpreter
- name and telephone contact details of the person the interpreter needs to report to
- nature of the matter to be discussed, for example, an aged care health assessment, a family violence police interview, etc.
- anticipated length of the interview
- the interpreter's name, if a specific interpreter is required for continuity of care reasons.

Similarly when booking a telephone interpreter, inform the language service provider about the telephone system that will be used, for example, is it a speaker phone, or will the interviewer and client be using a dual handset telephone?

For some clients, the gender of the interpreter will be important. Prior to booking an interpreter, you may wish to ask the client if he or she has a preference.

In some smaller communities, the interpreter may be known to the client. this may present difficulties for the client and or the interpreter especially in sensitive situations. knowing the name of the interpreter prior to the interview is useful to identify any concerns the client or interpreter may have.

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3.9 Working with Interpreters

Preparing for the session

- Brief the interpreter by providing general background information, such as the reason for the session, specific terms to be used and what needs to be achieved.
- For onsite interpreting, ensure the room is set up appropriately. Ideally, seats will be arranged in a triangle with the service provider facing the client.
- For Auslan interpreting it is normally best if the interpreter is seated or stands next to the service provider and opposite the client.
- For long sessions, a break for the interpreter should be considered.
- avoid leaving the interpreter alone with the client, either in the room where the interview will take place or a waiting room.
- For a telephone interpreting interview, ensure you have access to the appropriate telephone technology, and understand how to work the telephone system.

Beginning the interview

- Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client.
- explain the interpreter's role, noting that the interpreter's role is not to add to the communication, but only to interpret what is being said.
- explain the purpose of the session and what you hope to achieve. do not assume that the client knows what the interview is about.
- explain to the client that questions or concerns can be raised at any time during the interview.

During the interview

- talk directly to the client (not the interpreter) and maintain eye contact with the client.
- use the first person when speaking to your client. For example, say "what time did you arrive today?" instead of "what time did she arrive today?"
- use clear language and avoid using slang, colloquialisms and metaphors.
- make one point at a time. Pause until the end of a full sentence. keep questions, statements and comments short. this allows the interpreter to understand and remember what is being said and to interpret in stages.
- allow the interpreter to clarify information with you. If there is a need to clarify, ask the interpreter to explain this to the client first.
- allow the client to ask questions or raise issues at any time in the interview.
- If you have any questions about the client's cultural background, ask the client directly and not the interpreter.
- summarise the discussion occasionally to ensure the client understands the information.
- do not ask the interpreter to edit your information to suit the client's background.

At the end of the interview

- summarise key points for the client. check that the client understands any information you have conveyed.
- allow the interpreter to leave separately to the client.

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After the interview

- debrief the interpreter and discuss any issues experienced in the interview that related to the role of the interviewer or the interpreter.
- do not to ask the interpreter to express an opinion about the client or what they have said.
- Provide any positive feedback about the interpreting session and the ways in which the interpreter assisted the interview to run smoothly.
- raise any unprofessional or unsatisfactory practices directly with the interpreter at the end of the interview.

3.10 Complaints and feedback

Accredited interpreters are expected to comply with the *Code of Ethics* developed by the Australian Institute of Interpreters and translators (AIIT) or Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA). If an interpreter fails to comply with the principles outlined in the relevant *Code of Ethics*, complaints can be lodged with the language service provider.

The *AUSIT Code of Ethics* is available at www.ausit.org.

The *ASLIA Code of Ethics* can be found at www.aslia.com.au.

If there are issues with the performance of a specific interpreter, discuss them with the interpreter in the first instance. If not resolved, contact the relevant language service provider to make a formal complaint.

Other issues, such as the interpreter not attending, charging incorrect fees or interpreters with inappropriate levels of accreditation, can also be discussed with the language service provider.

Related Legislation / Documentation / Publication

- Department of Human Services
- Australian Service Excellence Standards
- Home Care Commons standards
- NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework Disability Service Act 1993
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner DCSI
- NDIS
- Home Care Common Standards Guardian and Administration Act 1993 National Disability Service
- National Standards For Disability Services

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